



# Keeping Up With Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center

Since 1984, Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center (AMHC), a not-for-profit group of resident-volunteers, has supported Alexandrians with mental disabilities and their families through advocacy, education and fundraising to meet social, vocational and emergency needs.

SPRING 2014 FUND DRIVE

[friendsofamhc@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofamhc@gmail.com)

[www.alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/friends](http://www.alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa/friends)



## The People We Serve

Nearly 90% of the 5,046 Alexandrians served by the Alexandria Community Service Board (CSB) last year have annual family incomes under \$25,000. Alexandrians of all ages receive mental health, intellectual disability and substance abuse services. Of the CSB's clients, 30% are children aged 0-19.

Friends is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization. Friends supports clients of the CSB. The CSB oversees the City's publicly funded services for Alexandrians with mental illness, intellectual disability or a substance dependency. CSB programs are implemented by the City's Department of Community & Human Services (DCHS). Visit [alexandriava.gov/DCHS](http://alexandriava.gov/DCHS) for more information.

Friends also supports community education projects with the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign, special activities for CSB consumers and West End Wellness Center members, and supplemental equipment and furnishings for CSB residential facilities.

### Consider a Donation

Please make your check payable to Friends of the AMHC and mail to Friends, 720 N. Saint Asaph St., Alexandria, VA 22314. You will receive a receipt. Help us be green by including your email address.

To donate online, go to [Razoo.com](http://Razoo.com)

If you would like to make a donation in memory of or in honor of someone, include a note with your contribution.

## How Your Support of Friends Helps People in Our City

Many of the requests that Friends receives are related to job-seeking assistance or loss of employment. Friends paid for an applicant to obtain fingerprinting to facilitate a background check. Another client's job ended, and your donations allowed Friends to pay for books, a class, testing and licensure for a food handling certification. When another client's husband lost his job, the family dropped behind in paying monthly bills. He is now employed again, but all income has gone to paying back rent. Friends paid the electric bill to help the family catch up. Especially in wintertime, clients gaining outdoor employment often need weather-appropriate clothing and work boots. Friends has also helped clients with various special needs, such as fees for young clients to benefit from after-school activities and providing for the delivery of professionally prepared meals for two Safe Haven residents. Donations from community members and groups enable Friends to respond to these important needs.

## Popularity of Mental Health First Aid Training Continues in Alexandria

To date, 11 Department of Community and Human Services instructors have trained nearly 200 City of Alexandria residents and employees in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). This training demonstrates the initial help given to a person showing signs of mental illness or a mental health crisis. The 8-hour course teaches risk factors, warning signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use disorders; the effects of illnesses and an overview of treatments; and a five-step action plan for helping someone with symptoms. Each class is two four-hour classes. Youth courses are available for adults responding to a youth in crisis. This training does not prepare someone to provide treatment. It is designed to help paraprofessionals and laypersons provide support until professional resources are accessed.

Thanks to the support of Friends donors, MHFA is offered at no cost to participants, as Friends purchases the student materials for the course. Registration is open until filled. Visit [alexandriava.gov/DCHS](http://alexandriava.gov/DCHS) for class dates and to sign up. Attendees of the full 8-hour course will receive a three-year certification in MHFA. For more about the classes, contact Donielle Marshall at 703.746.3523 or [donielle.marshall@alexandriava.gov](mailto:donielle.marshall@alexandriava.gov). To learn more about MHFA, visit [mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://mentalhealthfirstaid.org).



## Leadership Changes at the Department of Community and Human Services and the Community Services Board

In January, Dr. Michael Gilmore retired after ten years as director of the DCHS (and the predecessor department) and CSB Executive Director. Dr. Gilmore's many accomplishments were gratefully recalled by employees, friends, and well-wishers at a luncheon in his honor. Read more about his contributions to our city [here](#). (Visit [www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS](http://www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS) and scroll down to the January newsletter on the home page.)

The new DCHS director is Kate Garvey, who comes to Alexandria from Montgomery County, MD, where she served as Chief of Children, Youth and Family Services, and Social Services Director.

See Ms. Garvey's interview with Mayor William D. Euille on the program, *Mayor Euille Today*. Hear her discuss what attracted her to the City, her vision for DCHS, the strengths of the Department, and how DCHS services align with the City's strategic plan. Visit this [link](#), or from the City's home page at [www.alexandriava.gov](http://www.alexandriava.gov), go to ALEXtv and see the March 3 episode. (Ms. Garvey is half way through the program, following Police Chief Earl Cook.) The show will air throughout March on local channel 70.



The new CSB executive director is Suzanne Chis. In addition, Ms. Chis continues to serve as Deputy Director of DCHS and Director of Social Services. She has responsibility across DCHS for all social service programs, and provides direct supervision for the Department's Center for Economic Support, Center for Children and Families and Center for Adult Services. Ms. Chis came to the City in 1983. She received the Outside Collaboration Award from the Alexandria Community Services Board in 2009, and the Allies in Prevention Award from SCAN in 2011. Ms. Chis has been meeting with staff units to gain greater understanding of the work of CSB programs. She has learned a great deal and is impressed with the commitment and dedication of the staff.

## Past Events

At 'The Last Frontier of Civil Rights: Adults with Developmental Disabilities' at Beatley Library on November 20, a panel of speakers examined the history and status of efforts to create conditions that promote independence and self-determination for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Although public, private, and non-profit organizations have innovated in the critical areas of housing and employment, much work remains to be done to ensure that people with disabilities can lead productive, meaningful lives. During the Q&A period, a discussion of guardianship brought to the forefront the question of how to balance enhancing the rights of persons with disabilities to make their own decisions, and ensuring their personal safety or the safety of their assets.

### Goodwin House Angel Tree: Local Group Supports Seniors with Mental Health Conditions

Goodwin House Alexandria Memorial Chapel Outreach Committee presents Friends with a generous donation. Friends was thrilled to be designated as the 2013 beneficiary of the their annual Advent Angel Tree project. *Photo at right by Libby Sibold.*

Advocacy Activities: Friends is working harder than ever to advocate for the people we serve. During this year's General Assembly, we supported the following issues:

- Transition-age Services (ages 18-25): Transition-age services would bridge the gap between children's services and adult services and keep the most vulnerable youth from falling through the cracks in the existing system.
- Children's Crisis Services: As many as 100,000 children and adolescents in Virginia have a serious emotional disorder. While new funding over the past few years has improved services to these young people, additional funds are needed.
- Medicaid Expansion: Expanding Medicaid will open mental health and other medical services to an additional 40,000-80,000 adults with mental health disorders.

Friends also funded and helped facilitate a trip to Richmond for clients from the West End Wellness Center, where they spoke to delegates and senators about their needs.

We welcome your suggestions for issues you want us to support.

Agenda: Alexandria's "People with Mental Illnesses in the Justice System -Treatment and Re-Entry" featured a panel of mental health and criminal justice system civil servants who described how their agencies work together to respond appropriately to persons with mental illness. Discussion included training programs for first responders, including creation of Crisis Intervention Teams, methods for diverting persons with mental illness away from arrest to more effective treatment options, treatment programs in the jail for persons who must be incarcerated, and creation of a "web of support," through the Collaboration for Recovery and Re-Entry (CORE) program, for persons with mental illness to prepare them for a reentry that is both successful and safe for the community. Find details [here](http://www.agendaalexandria.org/reentry). [www.agendaalexandria.org/reentry](http://www.agendaalexandria.org/reentry)

## Coming Events - Save the Date

Spring2ACTION: This 24-hour online event encourages everyone to contribute to Alexandria's nonprofit organizations through a single online giving platform on Wednesday, April 9, 2014. Last year, Spring2ACTION raised nearly \$660,000 in one day, benefitting 97 local nonprofit organizations. For the past five years, Friends has participated, and we have been so excited and proud to witness the growth of this event year after year. We would be honored if you helped us reach our \$5k goal by making a contribution to Friends on April 9. You can contribute more by encouraging your friends and family to give. If you're concerned you might forget the date-- no problem, you can schedule your donation now. Go to [www.Spring2ACTION.org](http://www.Spring2ACTION.org). Thank you!



"Art Uniting People": This annual art show features the work of individuals whose lives have been affected by mental illness, addiction or developmental and intellectual disabilities. This year, the exhibit will convey its anti-stigma message to more Alexandrians! The exhibition will open and be on view at The Gallery @ Convergence from May 2 through June 13, at the Lee Center from June 16 through late November and then at the Durant Art Center from November 24 through July 6, 2015. If you are interested in submitting artwork, please contact [artunitingpeople@gmail.com](mailto:artunitingpeople@gmail.com) to receive an informational entry form or go to [www.HealthierAlexandria.org/antistigma](http://www.HealthierAlexandria.org/antistigma) to download a form.

Everyone is invited to attend Art Uniting People's opening reception at The Gallery @ Convergence, 1801 N. Quaker Lane, on Wednesday, May 7, from 5 to 8 p.m. Convergence, a faith community that explores the intersection of art, faith, and the human experience, is well known for displaying the work of local artists. Community members attending the reception will view the art, meet and talk with the artists, sample refreshments, and enjoy a performance by TBD, the Alexandria Harmonizers' Modern A Cappella Ensemble (shown below).

Art Uniting People is cosponsored by the Anti-Stigma Committee of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria, The Alexandria Commission for the Arts, The Department of Community and Human Services, The Community Services Board, The Department of Recreation, Parks, & Cultural Activities, Convergence, and Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center.

**Let's be green! Send your email address & comments to [Friendsfamhc@gmail.com](mailto:Friendsfamhc@gmail.com)**



*TBD, the Alexandria Harmonizers' Modern A Cappella Ensemble to perform at Art Uniting People Reception.*



### New Age of Addiction Training and Opportunity for DCHS Employees

Join us to learn about addiction, Fri, May 2 from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. at the First Baptist Church at 2932 King St. Caron Treatment Center is providing this training in partnership with Friends. Any proceeds go to Friends. For \$35, receive continental breakfast, lunch and 5 CEU's (for professionals attending). Topics are process addiction, dual diagnosis of mental illness and addiction, family component of addiction and recovery, and addiction in the elderly. Invite friends!

To attend, register at [www.caron.org/alexandria-workshop](http://www.caron.org/alexandria-workshop) by April 25.

**Note to DCHS employees--** indicate that you are a DCHS employee, and your fee will be covered by Friends through the Krasnow Training Fund!

### Spring Newsletter Honorees

Donations were made in memory of Bruce Thompson and Don Fowler and in honor of Mayor William D. Euille, Dr. Mike Gilmore, Jane Hassell and Greg Moore.

### Friends Board Members

Mary C. Ray, Co-Chair  
Daniel Sweeney Jr., Co-Chair  
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